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# MEMO

**SAN FRANCISCO OFFICE**
**August 18, 2006** Project Number: 100029

**To:** Valerie Knepper, MTC

**From:** Bill Hurrell/Elizabeth Cruz

**Subject:** Summary of Findings, MTC Case Study: Menlo Park

This memorandum presents a summary of findings regarding the City of Menlo Park's case study for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) *Reforming Parking Policies to Support Smart Growth Study*. This memorandum includes a description of the existing parking conditions, a summary of current parking trends, a review of the initial implications, and makes preliminary recommendations based on analysis of the parking data obtained. This information provides a basis for a potential parking management plan for the City of Menlo Park's Downtown Area.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Field Data

Existing parking conditions were observed and assessed within Downtown Menlo Park to understand current parking trends in the area. These existing conditions were developed through field observations of occupancy during a typical weekday and weekend day.

WSA observed on-street and off-street parking conditions within an eight block area of the Menlo Park downtown (bordered by Oak Grove Avenue to the north, Menlo Avenue to the south, University Avenue to the east, and Alma Street/CalTrain to the west), herein referred to as the "study area". The study area was selected as a portion of the Menlo Park downtown, and included the main commercial street as well as several typical on- and off-street parking facilities. Note that information collected within the study area was selected as a sample area to be reviewed and confirmed with earlier parking utilization data (occupancy) provided by a previous study, *Menlo Park Downtown Parking Study*, conducted in 1999. Figure 1 presents the location of the parking study area.

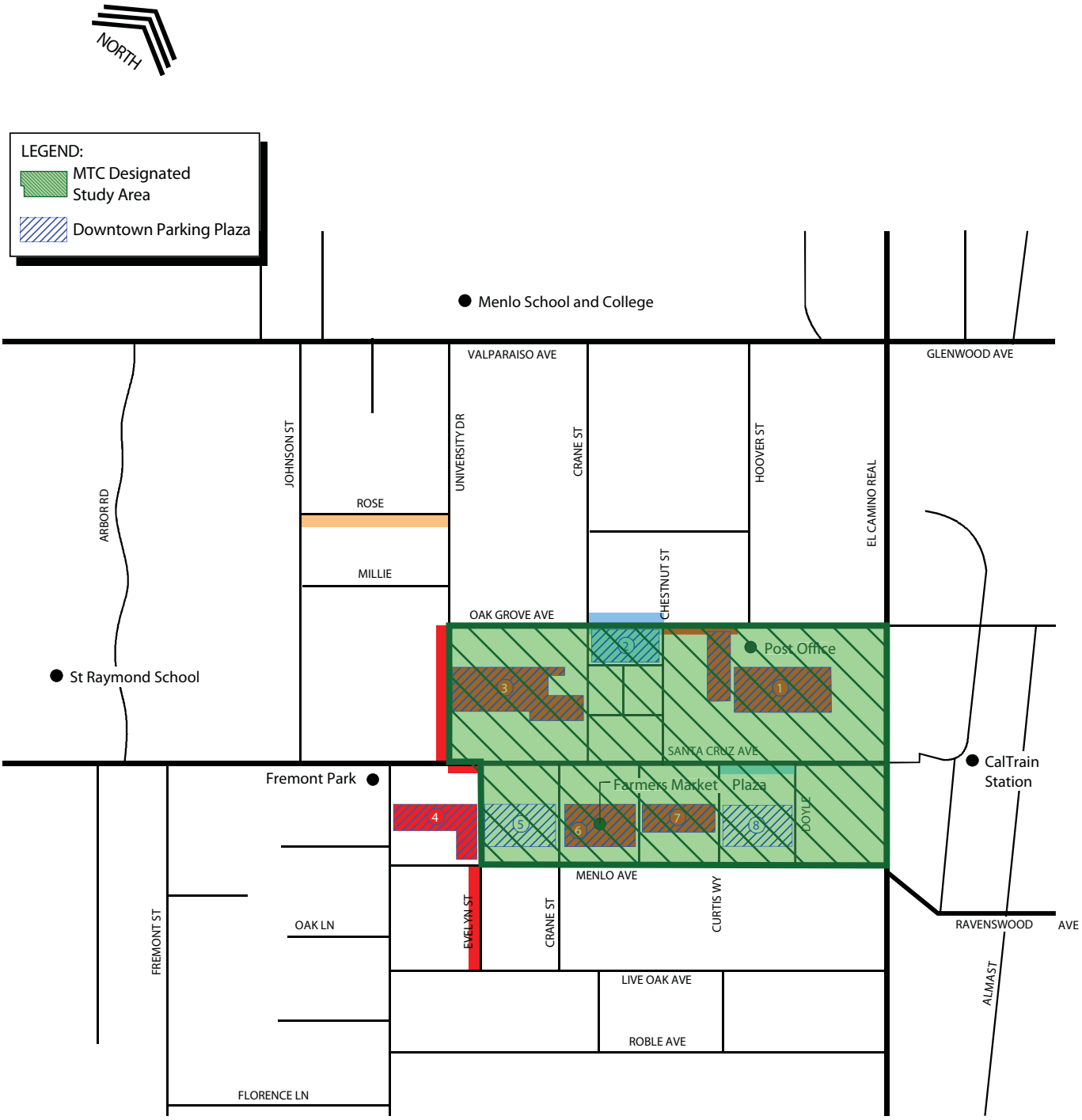


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Figure 1
**DESIGNATED STUDY AREA**
100029/STUDY AREA - 08/14/06

**Occupancy**

Parking occupancy refers to the accumulation of parking or the percentage of parking spaces utilized during a specific period of time. Occupancy is recorded by counting the number of vehicles parked during the specific time period compared to the total inventory of spaces available. From this comparison, an average occupancy rate is defined at that time period. Occupancy rates are typically separated by on-street and off-street parking facilities. For this study, parking occupancy was observed during a three-hour period from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM on a weekday and weekend day to review and confirm the data from the *Downtown Parking Study (1999)*[1].

**Weekday**

Existing on-street weekday midday occupancy is fairly consistent with the *Downtown Parking Study* (1999). Table 1 presents the weekday midday parking occupancy observed in 2006 while Table 1A presents the weekday midday parking occupancy observed in 1999. In general, the average occupancy for the peak hour (12:00 PM) under existing condition is shown to be approximately 85 percent. In 1999, weekday midday peak parking occupancy for the commercial core[2] was noted at an average of approximately 88 percent. Based on the data, on-street parking is shown to operate around "practical capacity." Practical capacity is the point in demand where users are willing to change behaviors to be able to park in an area and there are available spaces to allow more users to be accommodated (or 15 percent of available parking capacity). As such, practical capacity allows manipulation and control of parking demands through management tools and policies, a point which will be discussed in later sections.

**Table 1**
**Weekday Midday (10:00 AM to 1:00 PM)**
**On-Street Parking Occupancy – July 2006**

| Block | Supply (# of Spaces) | 10:00 AM | | 11:00 PM | | 12:00 PM | | 1:00 PM | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | # Spaces | % Occup. | # Spaces | % Occup. | # Spaces | % Occup. | # Spaces | % Occup. |
| **1** | 60 | 34 | 57% | 41 | 68% | 44 | 73% | 42 | 70% |
| **2** | 31 | 28 | 90% | 30 | 97% | 29 | 94% | 28 | 90% |
| **3** | 55 | 35 | 64% | 40 | 73% | 48 | 87% | 41 | 75% |
| **4** | 15 | 15 | 100% | 14 | 93% | 15 | 100% | 14 | 93% |
| **5** | 19 | 16 | 84% | 19 | 100% | 14 | 74% | 13 | 68% |
| **6** | 26 | 26 | 62% | 19 | 73% | 21 | 81% | 23 | 89% |
| **7** | 26 | 25 | 96% | 24 | 92% | 26 | 100% | 25 | 96% |
| **8** | 12 | 8 | 67% | 10 | 83% | 11 | 92 | 10 | 83% |
| **Total** | **224** | **187** | **77%** | **197** | **81%** | **208** | **85%** | **196** | **80%** |

Source: Wilbur Smith Associates, July 2006

[1] Data Collected in 1998 for this study.

[2] The Commercial Core of Menlo Park is defined as the area the Commercial core was considered to be the area bounded by University Drive, El Camino Real, Oak Grove, and Menlo Avenue.

| Table 1A<br>Weekday Midday<br>On-Street Parking Occupancy Spring 1998 | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Area** | **Supply** | **% Occupied** |
| Commercial Core North of Santa Cruz | 159 | 86% |
| Commercial Core South of Santa Cruz | 176 | 89% |

Source: Menlo Park Downtown Parking Study, 1999.

**Note:**

The Commercial core was considered to be the area bounded by University Drive, El Camino Real, Oak Grove, and Menlo Avenue.

In general, off-street parking during the midday period has decreased from the time of the Menlo Park Downtown Parking Study. Existing weekday midday parking occupancy is observed in the range of 64 to 84 percent with a peak hour occupancy occurring at 1:00 PM where as weekday midday parking occupancy observed in 1998 was noted at 89 percent. It should be noted however that the data revealed some consistencies with respect to the highest occupancy rates. Plazas 2, 3, and 7 were consistently observed to have the highest occupancy rates for the years 1997, 1998, and 2006. Table 2 presents the weekday midday off-street parking occupancy for each Plaza based on surveys conducted in July 2006. Table 2A presents the weekday midday off-street parking occupancy for each Plaza based on the *Menlo Park Downtown Parking Study*, 1999.

| Table 2<br>Weekday Midday (10:00 AM to 1:00 PM)<br>Off-Street Parking Occupancy – July 2006 | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Plaza #** | **Supply** (1) | **10:00 AM** | | **11:00 PM** | | **12:00 PM** | | **1:00 PM** | |
| | | **# Spaces** | **% Occup.** | **# Spaces** | **% Occup.** | **# Spaces** | **% Occup.** | **# Spaces** | **% Occup.** |
| **#1** | 249 | 160 | 64% | 174 | 70% | 180 | 72% | 199 | 80% |
| **#2** | 95 | 50 | 53% | 70 | 74% | 77 | 81% | 91 | 96% |
| **#3** | 212 | 154 | 73% | 182 | 86% | 190 | 90% | 181 | 85% |
| **#4** | 101 | 72 | 71% | 74 | 73% | 72 | 71% | 79 | 78% |
| **#5** | 107 | 74 | 69% | 78 | 73% | 82 | 77% | 88 | 82% |
| **#6** | 130 | 66 | 51% | 76 | 58% | 79 | 61% | 101 | 78% |
| **#7** | 94 | 57 | 61% | 85 | 90% | 92 | 98% | 92 | 98% |
| **#8** | 145 | 94 | 65% | 113 | 78% | 121 | 83% | 120 | 83% |
| **Total** | **1,133** | **727** | **64%** | **852** | **75%** | **893** | **79%** | **951** | **84%** |

Source: Wilbur Smith Associates Occupancy Counts, July 2006.

**Note:**

(1) The supply observed in 2006 is lower due to the fact that some spaces were under construction.

| Table 2A<br>Weekday Midday<br>Off-Street Parking Occupancy Spring 1998 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Plaza #** | **Supply** | **May 1997** | **Spring 1998** |
| | | **% Occupied** | **% Occupied** |
| 1 | 249 | 84% | 92% |
| 2 | 95 | 100% | 93% |
| 3 | 212 | 100% | 98% |
| 4 | 105 | 94% | 93% |
| 5 | 150 | 79% | 80% |
| 6 | 136 | 80% | 79% |
| 7 | 94 | 100% | 84% |
| 8 | 145 | 99% | 87% |
| **Total** | **1,186** | **91%** | **89%** |

Source: Menlo Park Downtown Parking Study, 1999.

Note that Plaza 2 has consistently operated at or near capacity over the years (1997, 1998, and 2006) with occupancy levels of 100 percent, 93 percent, and 96 percent, respectively. Plaza 3 has shown similar levels of occupancy, 100 percent, 98 percent, and 90 percent. It should be noted that both Plaza 2 and 3 are located on the north side of Santa Cruz Avenue which suggests that demand for parking tends to be higher on the north side of Santa Cruz Avenue. Parking for the remaining parking plazas indicate that parking occupancy has tended to fluctuate for plazas 1, 4, 7, and 8 and remained fairly consistent for plazas 5 and 6. Overall, the parking plazas show to operate at around 80 percent.

| Table 3<br>Weekday Midday<br>Private Off-Street Parking Occupancy – July 2006 | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Location** | **Supply** | **10:00 AM** | | **11:00 PM** | | **12:00 PM** | | **1:00 PM** | |
| | | **# Spaces** | **% Occup.** | **# Spaces** | **% Occup.** | **# Spaces** | **% Occup.** | **# Spaces** | **% Occup.** |
| Trader Joe's | 24 | 12 | 50% | 22 | 92% | 21 | 88% | 21 | 88% |
| Bank of America | 24 | 10 | 42% | 12 | 50% | 16 | 67% | 16 | 67% |
| **Total** | **48** | **22** | **46%** | **34** | **71%** | **44** | **92%** | **37** | **77%** |

Source: Wilbur Smith Associates, July 2006.

Overall, for public lots the peak occupancy was observed to occur at 1:00 PM with an average parking occupancy of 84 percent. Although the private off-street parking lots, are typically are not open to serve public uses, it is useful to observe how other spaces are being utilized in the downtown. For private lots, the peak hour was observed at 12:00 PM with an average off-street occupancy of 92 percent.

**Weekend (Saturday)**

On-street weekend midday occupancy shows that parking operates at a range between 61 and 73 percent with the peak hour occurring at 12:00 PM. Overall, on-street parking operates at 12 to 25 percent below practical capacity. Table 4 presents the range of parking occupancies observed by block and hour within the midday period.

**Table 4**
**Weekend (Saturday) Midday (10:00 AM to 1:00 PM)**
**On-Street Parking Occupancy – July 2006**

| Block # | Supply | 10:00 AM | | 11:00 AM | | 12:00 PM | | 1:00 PM | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | # Spaces | % Occup. | # Spaces | % Occup. | # Spaces | % Occup. | # Spaces | % Occup. |
| **#1** | 60 | 22 | 37% | 34 | 57% | 34 | 67% | 31 | 52% |
| **#2** | 31 | 22 | 71% | 27 | 87% | 21 | 68% | 21 | 68% |
| **#3** | 55 | 33 | 60% | 34 | 62% | 38 | 69% | 33 | 60% |
| **#4** | 15 | 11 | 73% | 8 | 53% | 12 | 80% | 11 | 73% |
| **#5** | 19 | 12 | 63% | 13 | 68% | 14 | 74% | 14 | 74% |
| **#6** | 26 | 21 | 81 | 16 | 32% | 25 | 96% | 24 | 92% |
| **#7** | 26 | 17 | 65% | 21 | 81% | 23 | 89% | 23 | 88% |
| **#8** | 12 | 11 | 92% | 12 | 100% | 11 | 92% | 11 | 92% |
| **Total** | **244** | **149** | **61%** | **165** | **67%** | **178** | **73%** | **168** | **69%** |

Off-street weekend midday occupancy in the downtown parking plazas is shown to be notably less than that observed for on-street parking during the same period. Table 5 presents the off-street parking occupancy for the parking plazas within the downtown. The average parking occupancy for the parking plazas within the weekend midday period ranged from 53 percent to 62 percent and the peak hour was observed to occur at 12:00 PM

**Table 5**
**Weekend (Saturday) Midday (10:00 AM to 1:00 PM)**
**Off-Street Parking Occupancy – July 2006**

| Plaza # | Supply | 10:00 AM | | 11:00 PM | | 12:00 PM | | 1:00 PM | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | # Spaces | % Occup. | # Spaces | % Occup. | # Spaces | % Occup. | # Spaces | % Occup. |
| **#1** | 249 | 131 | 53% | 133 | 53% | 139 | 56% | 116 | 47% |
| **#2** | 95 | 72 | 76% | 66 | 69% | 59 | 62% | 56 | 59% |
| **#3** | 212 | 146 | 69% | 133 | 63% | 112 | 53% | 124 | 58% |
| **#4** | 101 | 73 | 72% | 74 | 73% | 95 | 34% | 72 | 71% |
| **#5** | 150 | 28 | 19% | 59 | 39% | 51 | 34% | 68 | 45% |
| **#6** | 130 | 38 | 29% | 66 | 51% | 74 | 57% | 74 | 57% |
| **#7** | 94 | 55 | 59% | 56 | 60% | 78 | 83% | 64 | 68% |
| **#8** | 145 | 86 | 59% | 110 | 76% | 124 | 86% | 134 | 92% |
| **Total** | **1,176** | **629** | **53%** | **697** | **59%** | **732** | **62%** | **708** | **60%** |

For the private off-street parking lots, the observed weekend parking occupancy ranges from 58 percent to 81 percent. This parking occupancy is generally lower than that observed during the weekday which ranged from 46 percent to 92 percent. Table 6 presents the weekend occupancy information for off-street private parking.

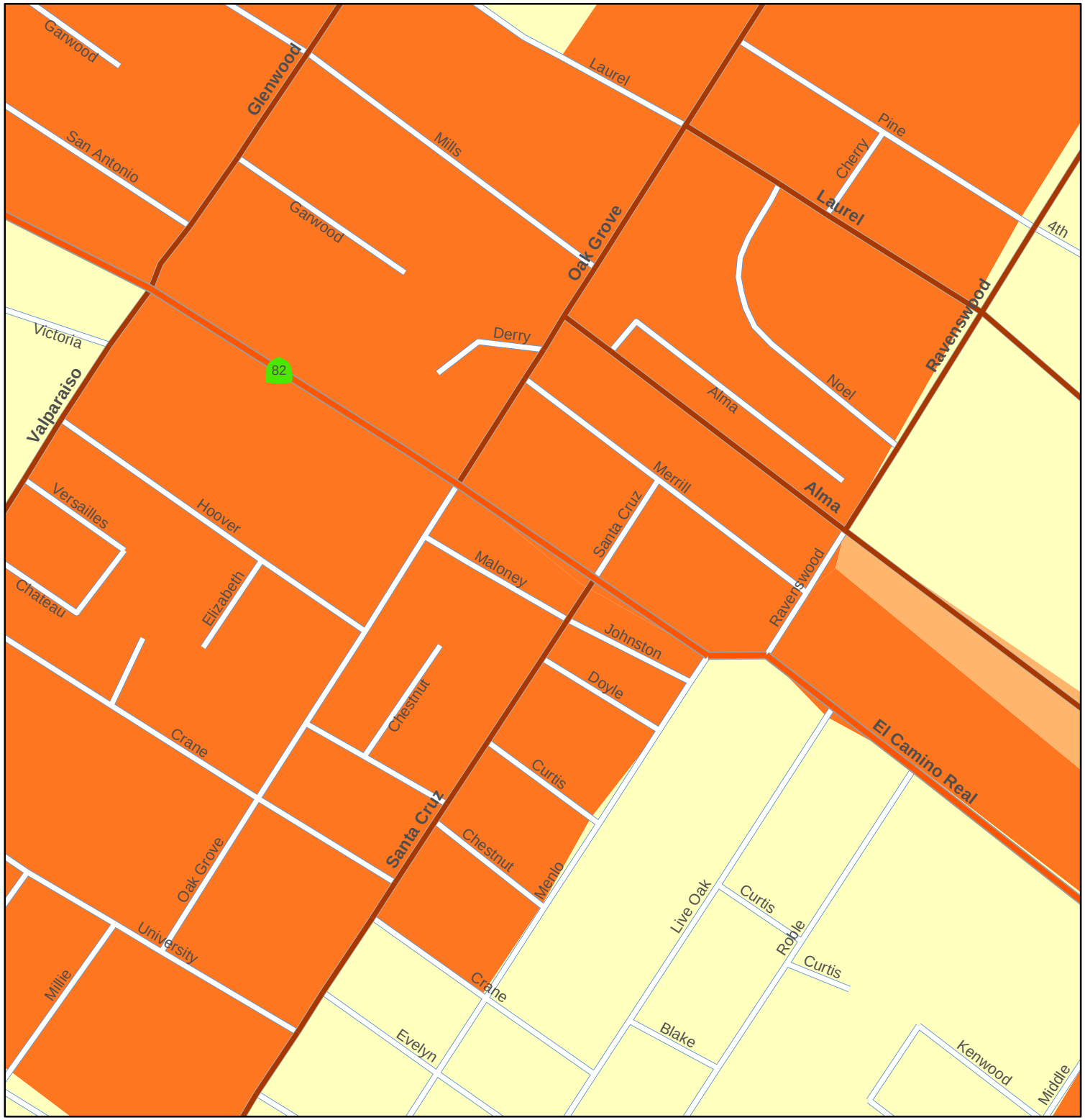
**Table 6**
**Weekend (Saturday) Midday**
**Private Off-Street Parking Occupancy – July 2006**

| Location | Supply | 10:00 AM | | 11:00 PM | | 12:00 PM | | 1:00 PM | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | # Spaces | % Occup. | # Spaces | % Occup. | # Spaces | % Occup. | # Spaces | % Occup. |
| Trader Joe's | 24 | 20 | 83% | 24 | 100% | 23 | 96% | 24 | 100% |
| Bank of America | 24 | 8 | 33% | 10 | 42% | 13 | 54% | 15 | 63% |
| **Total** | **48** | **28** | **58%** | **34** | **71%** | **36** | **75%** | **39** | **81%** |

Source: Wilbur Smith Associates, July 2006.

## Car Ownership

A preliminary look at car ownership data (Census 2000) for the study area (Figure 2) shows that there are a significant percentage of households with no car available. These findings support the idea that proximity to a major transit hub will attract households that choose to use transit whether for reasons of economics, health or personal choice. The level of car ownership is a good indicator of the potential for many of the smart growth strategies being considered for the Station District. Additional data will be reviewed including the MTC analysis of the Bay Area Transportation Survey (BATS) data and Census 2000 data for 1-car ownership and mode to work.




# Figure 2
## Menlo Park
## Zero Auto Households

- 0 - 5%
- 5 - 10%
- 10 - 50%
- over 50%

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Feet
0 125 250 500

## Land Use and Zoning

### General Plan

The City of Menlo Park's General Plan is referred to as the "constitution" for the development and use of its land. As such, the document identifies specific goals the city wishes to achieve and quantifiable policies to realize their goals. The General Plan states that its central purpose is to "maintain Menlo Park's special character as a residential community that includes a broad range of residential, business, and employment opportunities and to provide for the change necessary to maintain a vital community."

According to the General Plan, much of the city's land acreage is devoted to single-family residential development with densities in the range of 3.5 to 5.0 units per acre. Multi-family units are typically located near El Camino Real and the Downtown area. With respect to commercial land use in the downtown, the plan emphasizes the historic character of the commercial district, promotes the continuous upgrading of the area, and an emphasis on retail uses over office and personal uses. Recently, the City has come to review several applications for mixed-use high density projects in and around the Downtown Area. Projects being considered propose to increase housing and retail opportunities in the downtown in close proximity to the CalTrain station. In order to be approved, these projects require that amendments be made to the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Notably, revisions to the Zoning Ordinance regarding maximum allowable densities, height restrictions, setbacks, and other such design concepts need to occur to allow for such types of development. Based on the community and City's desire to think about downtown development in new ways, the Menlo Park Center City Design Guidelines were developed.

### Menlo Park Center City Design Guidelines

The intent of the Design Guidelines is to provide a framework the city's evaluation of project design. By providing the specific guidelines for site design and district strategies, the Center City Design document helps to articulate the community's vision for the growth and regulation of development within the Downtown. The area specific guidelines are intended to individually treat and reinforce a set of desired characteristics for the distinct areas of downtown. As such, specific design concepts are tailored to each of the different sections of downtown. Notably, design guidelines have been developed for the following sections of the downtown which are encompassed within the study area, they are: the cross streets of Santa Cruz Avenue, El Camino Real Central, Menlo/Oak Grove, the Parking Plazas, and Santa Cruz Avenue. .

The District Strategies are designed to help outline the intentions for each district by reinforcing the existing positive qualities of the area as well as encouraging new uses and relationships to promote livability. Each district possesses a set of unique characteristics and a quality of place about it. Accordingly, the City has identified and characterized the district areas in very distinct ways. The cross streets of Santa Cruz Avenue are described as key connections to the Parking Plazas throughout the downtown. As such, the guiding policies for this area shall be to ensure that future development supports and reinforces the function of the streets as a pedestrian domain. The intent for the area of El Camino Real Central will be to establish it as an

"identifiable center for Menlo Park." Accordingly, the specific plan designates the area as an entertainment district with the greatest intensity of activity and uses. Particular attention is given to the way in which new buildings should relate to the area. Specifically, new development should support public gathering along El Camino Real and accordingly accommodate parking behind its buildings or internalize it within the site.

Acting as the established north and south boundaries of Downtown, Oak Grove Avenue and Menlo Avenue act as connectors for motorists and the City has chosen to treat these streets as transition areas between the residential uses and commercial areas of the downtown. Accordingly, the design guidelines for this section of downtown are aimed at improving the experience of all uses of the street, reinforcing the continuous façades of buildings, and introducing more consistently landscaped street edge. As the defining heart of downtown, Santa Cruz Avenue is characterized by continuous building lines, a variety of retail sources, and a strong pedestrian realm. In an effort to reinforce the existing character of Santa Cruz Avenue, the guidelines for this street are to encourage mixed-use development that supports a variety of uses and amenities close to the rail station.

With respect to its Parking Plazas, the City has chosen to have the parking plazas take on a supportive role of the primary activities on the adjacent streets. Design guidelines for the parking plazas focus on the treatment of buildings facades with attractively designed entrances, reinforcing the importance of the public realm by providing recessed building entries to encourage pedestrian gatherings on the street and continuous sidewalks along the edge of buildings to reinforce a strong pedestrian connection with the surrounding areas

## SMART GROWTH PARKING

### Goals

The City of Menlo Park has several goals that they want to achieve as part of the Smart Growth Parking study:

- An objective look at existing minimum/maximum parking requirements, parking controls, and enforcement to determine their appropriateness for Downtown development.
- Evaluation of strategies for parking in Downtown including pricing and time limit options
- Guidelines for shared use practices and use of in-lieu fees for development of parking facilities and support of TDM programs
- Role and implications of parking structures in Downtown

Menlo Park's existing relevant policies including those from the City's municipal code, Center City Design Guidelines, and General Plan will be discussed and analyzed as to how they contribute to or hinder the City from furthering these goals.

## Existing Relevant Policies

A review of the City of Menlo Park's General Plan, Center City Design Guidelines, and Zoning Ordinance, has identified the following goals and parking policies that contribute to or hinder SMART Growth for the City. The policies were evaluated according to the SMART Growth principles they help illustrate, including:

- Density
- Connectivity/Walkability/Livability
- Transit/Mode Choice
- Convenience/Ease of Use
- Progressive Financing/Pricing
- Overall/Overarching Benefits

### Menlo Park's Municipal Code

**Chapter 16.41 C-3 Central Commercial District**

**16.41.030 Development Regulations**

Development regulations in the C-3 district are as follows:
(6) Height of structures shall not exceed thirty feet (30'); (8) The development of residential dwelling units shall be in accordance with the regulations contained herein with the following exceptions: (A) The maximum number of residential dwelling units shall not exceed 18.5 dwelling units per acre; (B) The maximum gross floor area for residential dwelling units shall not exceed one hundred percent (100%) of the total lot area; and (C) The off-street parking for the residential units shall be in accordance with Section 16.72.020(1). (Ord. 931 § 2 (part), 2004: Ord. 863 § 9, 1994; Ord. 837 § 2 (part), 1992; Ord. 766 § 2 (part), 1988; Ord. 739 § 2 (part), 1986; Prior code § 30.417(C)).
***Smart Growth Benefits***: Density
**Reconsider**: The current zoning ordinance places a number of restrictions with respect to the amount of allowable density of downtown development. In the C-3 Central Commercial District, the maximum allowable height for all structures is limited to 30 feet and the number of residential dwelling units is capped at 18.5 per acre. These types of development regulations are not conducive to promoting Transit Oriented Development because they permit lower densities through building volumes and height limits that those required to sustain high levels of transit ridership. An amendment to the zoning code is necessary to allow for higher intensity development that reinforces the city and region's transportation investments notably, CalTrain.

**Chapter 16.72 Off-Street Parking**
**16.72.040 C-2, C-2-A, C-2-B, C-3 and C-4 district uses.**
Six (6) spaces per one thousand (1,000) square feet of gross floor area, not in any required yard or loading area. (Ord. 769-A § 1, 1988; Ord. 579 Art. II, 1975: Prior code § 30.520(C)).
***Smart Growth Benefit:*** None
**Reconsider**: The current parking requirements for uses within the Commercial district have the potential to be reduced to complement the proposed vision for a Downtown environment which is of higher density, mixed-use, and offers transit accessibility. By clustering together several

uses which complement and support other activities in the area, fewer parking spaces are required to accommodate them and as such encourage opportunities for shared parking.

General Plan

**Goal I-A: To maintain and improve the character and stability of Menlo Park's existing residential neighborhoods while providing for the development of a variety of housing types. The preservation of open space shall be encouraged.**

**Policy I-A-4:** Residential uses may be combined with commercial uses in mixed use project, if the project is designed to avoid conflicts between the uses, such as traffic, parking, noise, dust, and odors;
**Policy I-A-9:** Residential developments subject to requirements of the Below Market Rate (BMR) Housing Program may be permitted to increase the total density, number of units and floor area of residential projects up to a maximum of 15 percent above that otherwise permitted by the applicable zoning.
***Smart Growth Benefits:*** Density

**Policy I-B-2:** Parking which is sufficient to serve the retail needs of the Downtown area and which is attractively designed to encourage retail patronage shall be provided
***Smart Growth Benefit:*** Connectivity/Walkability/Livability

**Goal I-D: Encourage the rehabilitation and continued use of viable and appropriate neighborhood commercial uses or collections of stores servicing surrounding residential districts**

**Policy I-D-1:** Special attention should be given to strengthen the neighborhood shopping center throughout the city. This can be done by continuing the existing policy of removing marginal uses or vacant commercially-zoned properties from the present commercial zoning and placing them in a residential land use category or rezoning to the P District
***Smart Growth Benefit:*** Density
**Reconsider**: Re-use/rehabilitation of vacant lots may best achieved through more aggressive infill policies.

**Goal I-G: To promote the preservation of open-space lands for recreation, protection of natural resources, the production of managed resources, protection of health and safety, and/or the enhancement of scenic qualities.**

**Policy I-G-10:** Extensive landscaping should be included in public and private development, including greater landscaping in large parking areas. Where appropriate, the City shall encourage placement of a portion of the required parking in landscape reserve until such time as the parking is needed.
**Policy I-G-11:** Well-designed pedestrian facilities should be included in area of intensive pedestrian activity.
***Smart Growth Benefits:*** Connectivity/Walkability/Livability

**Goal I-E: To promote the development and retention of commercial uses which provide significant revenue to the City and/or goods or services needed by the community and which have low environmental and traffic impacts.**

**Policy I-E-4:** Any new or expanded office use must include provision for adequate off-street parking, mitigating traffic impacts, and developing effective alternatives to auto commuting, must adhere to acceptable architectural standards, and must protect residential uses from adverse impacts.
***Smart Growth Benefits:*** Transit/Mode Choice

**Goal II-B: To promote the use of public Transit**

**Policy II-B-1:** The City shall consider transit modes in the design of transportation improvements and the review and approval of development projects;
**Policy II-B-2:** As many activities as possible should be located within easy walking distance of transit stops, and transit stops should be conveniently and close to as many activities as possible;
**Policy II-B-3:** The City shall promote improved public transit service and increased transit ridership, especially to office and industrial areas and schools
**Policy II-B-6:** The City shall support extension of CalTrain to the Market Street area in San Francisco
**Policy II-B-3:** The City shall oppose termination in Menlo Park of any future extension of BART
***Smart Growth Benefits:*** Transit/Mode Choice, Walkability/Livability, Density

**Goal II-C: To promote the use of alternatives to the single occupant automobile**

**Policy II-C-2**: The City shall provide information to existing and new Menlo Park employers to assist their employees in identifying potential carpools, transit alternatives, and other commute alternatives.
**Policy II-C-5:** The City shall identify potential funding sources, to supplement City and private monies to support transportation demand management activities of City and local employers.
**Policy II-C-7:** Commuter shuttle service between the industrial work centers and the Downtown Transportation Center should be maintained and improved, within fiscal constraints. The City shall encourage SamTrans and other agencies to provide funding to support shuttle services
***Smart Growth Benefits:*** Transit/Mode Choice

**Goal II-D: To promote the safe use of bicycles as a commute alternative and for recreation**
**Policy II-D-2**: The City shall within available funding, work to complete a system of bikeways within Menlo Park;
**Policy II-D-4**: The City shall require new commercial and industrial development to provide secure bicycle storage facilities on-site;
**Policy II-D-5**: The City shall encourage transit providers within San Mateo County to provide improved bicycle access to transit including storage at transit stations and on-board storage where feasible.
***Smart Growth Benefits:*** Mode Choice

**Goal II-E: To promote walking as a commute alternative and for short trips**

**Policy II-E-1:** The City shall require all new development to incorporate safe and attractive pedestrian facilities on-site
**Policy II-E-3:** Appropriate traffic control shall be provided for pedestrian at intersections
**Policy II-E-5:** The City shall support full pedestrian access across all legs of an intersection at all signalized intersections which are City-controlled and at the signalized intersections along El Camino Real.
***Smart Growth Benefits:*** Connectivity/Walkability, Mode Choice

**Goal II-F: To provide adequate parking in the Downtown area, specifically for retail customers and CalTrain patrons.**
**Policy II-F-2:** Short-term retail customer parking shall be first priority for the allocation of parking spaces in Downtown parking plazas. Long-term employee parking shall be located in such a manner that it does not create a shortage of customer parking adjacent to retail shops.
***Smart Growth Benefits:***
**Reconsider:** Since long term parking for employees has been identified as an important issue for the City, a central parking facility is an opportunity to implement the benefits of shared parking between the potential complementary uses (i.e. day time office and evening commercial). This could result in the need for less overall parking due to different peak demands and thus may increase the overall utilization rates of the parking facility.

City of Menlo Center City Design Guidelines

**Parking Guidelines**
**P1:** Internalize parking within the building site; accommodate below grace, or screen from the street with defined boundaries such as low (3.5 feet) walls/and or landscaping.
**P2**: Minimize the number and width of curb cuts and encourage shared driveways entries to parking and services.
***Smart Growth Benefits:*** Connectivity/Walkability/Livability

**P3**: Plant shade trees and provide evenly spaced, pedestrian scaled light fixtures throughout parking areas to ensure that surface parking lots become a positive point of departure in the pedestrian experience of the Center City.
***Smart Growth Benefits:*** Connectivity/Walkability/Livability

**P4**: Provide multiple pedestrian accesses between parking areas and surrounding streets. All driveways should incorporate a pedestrian walkway on the side closest to the building.
***Smart Growth Benefits:*** Connectivity/Walkability/Livability

**P5**: Do not allow parking in any setback areas between the front of the buildings and the sidewalk edge. Parking can be accommodated at the side of buildings if it does not encroach on setbacks required in this document or the Zoning Ordinance.
**P7:** Allow split level parking only if the street is well fronted with habitable landscaped spaces. Such spaces can include seating, stairs, or stoops, areas with special planting, and other pedestrian scaled elements that add visual interest to the street.

**P8**: First floor parking within the building footprint is not appropriate on the street-side of a building
***Smart Growth Benefits:*** Connectivity/Walkability/Livability

**Street Frontage Guidelines**
**SF 4:** Incorporate into residential architectural elements that signal habitation and provide a "front" for the street;
**SF 5:** Recess building entries to create opportunities for visible pedestrian activity and niches of usable space;
**SF 6**: Articulate building façades by accentuating entries, bay windows, pass-throughs, and incorporating shading devices and awnings. Façade should be suggestion of uses and activities inside the building;
**SF7:** Avoid facing the street with blank walls, parking areas, driveways, or garage doors.
***Smart Growth Benefits****:* Connectivity/Walkability/Livability

**Building Volume Guidelines**
**Goals: Consider development of 4 stories (up to 50 feet height) for portions of buildings which include housing, community service uses or create active public space. Step the fourth floor of buildings back from the street (El Camino Real)**

**BV1:** Shape the overall building mass to reinforce the definition and importance of the street
**BV2:** Relate height and mass distribution of new development to adjoining structures
***Smart Growth Benefits:*** Density
**Reconsider:** The policy can be more explicitly stated to encourage specific types of density

**Landscape/Open Space Guidelines**
**L/O 1:** Use landscaping in setback areas to build up a consistently landscaped street edge, a pleasant character to the street, and provide privacy for residents.
**L/O 2B**: Provide for public amenities in open spaces and recessed entry areas such as places to sit and shade from trees, awnings, or overhangs. Dimension such spaces to accommodate people spilling out from businesses
***Smart Growth Benefits****:* Walkability/Livability

## Implications for Smart Growth

The City of Menlo Park has several smart growth goals articulated in its General Plan and Center City Design Guidelines. The focus of these goals is to develop the Center of Menlo Park with a "sense of place" as an identifiable and distinct community that invites people to gather and is the heart of the City. However, many of these goals require specific supporting policies to be fully implemented. Implementation of these policies is further dependant on upon a revision of the existing municipal code which currently acts as a limiting factor as opposed to a catalyst in promoting smart growth.

As Menlo Park strives to create an increasingly mixed-use, compact, and more walkable downtown its current application of parking requirements for uses within the area may prove to

hinder these goals by creating excessive parking. A comparison of the Menlo Park's parking requirements for commercial/retail uses to those of other neighboring Bay Area cities has shown them to be consistently higher[3]. The problem with excessive parking requirements is that they result in a [lose-lose situation] as they waste resources, both directly, by increasing the money and land devoted to parking facilities, and indirectly, by increasing automobile use and sprawl[4]. By tailoring parking requirements based an analysis of the variables affecting parking demand such as development density, transit availability, car ownership, and household income, parking requirements can be developed to better serve and compliment the land uses which they are intended to support. As such, reduced parking requirements can help the City of Menlo Park achieve many of the goals it has established for itself including promoting better architecture and urban design, a goal that is consistently reinforced in the Center City Design Guidelines. By internalizing or "tucking away" parking within the building site, the potential to invest in the public realm through streetscape improvements, façade articulation of buildings, is greatly expanded.

Reduced parking requirements can be implemented through a variety of means. One of the primary ways to achieve this is through a regulating (zoning) code. Once a parking reduction is codified, it is more easily enforced. Reduced parking requirements can be established through "parking maximums" that effectively place a cap on the amount of parking that is allowed in a particular area. Additionally, the amount of required parking can be tailored to reflect the demographic factors of a particular area. Studies have established a relationship between income and vehicle ownership rates, such that lower income households own fewer vehicles on average, especially in areas with quality transportation alternatives. Accordingly, parking requirements can be reduced for this and similar contexts. In Menlo Park, where data for the downtown reflects a sizable portion of households to be without vehicles, the potential exists for revised parking requirements to reflect the reduced demand in parking accordingly. It should also be noted that in combination with accessibility to transit, an added benefit of parking reductions near transit would be reduce the cost of development which would further the City's goals to develop a greater variety of housing types.

On- and off-street (public) parking shows peak hour occupancies near 85 percent. The Menlo Park Downtown Parking Study established that within the commercial core, the public parking supply provided by the City includes the eight parking plazas and the long-term unrestricted on-street spaces. It should be noted that the parking plazas are open to employee permit holders which make up about a third of the parkers. This suggests that the majority of employees park elsewhere, most likely on-street or in private facilities. This further indicates that there is a significant demand for long-term parking. On-street parking spaces are valuable because they are conveniently located within the downtown. By pricing parking to reflect the convenience on-street spaces, pricing centrally located spaces higher and lower prices for those spaced located in the periphery or off-street lots, parking will be used more efficiently as short-term parkers chose

[3] MTC Existing Parking Policies Paper, 2006.
[4] Litman, Todd. Parking Management *Strategies, Evaluation, and Planning.* Victoria Transportation Policy Institute, 2006.

to pay for the more convenient spaces while long-term parkers will opt to park in more remote locations or lots.

In the same light, the existing eight off-street parking plazas can be more efficiently managed through their consolidation into 2 or 3 larger centralized parking facilities. By conveniently locating parking in a few locations, this eliminates the breaks in sidewalk continuity that is created through curb cuts and driveways. Centralized parking promotes the creation of a "park once" environment that encourages people to park, walk, and visit multiple destinations. Centralized facilities also allow parking to be internalized with a site and by it "tucking away" increase the potential for the City to invest in the public realm through streetscape improvements, façade articulation of buildings.

The City of Menlo Park should also consider that the value of land upon which the parking plazas are built is incredibly high and parking facilities that are not managed and priced appropriately are sources of untapped revenue. The potential exists for these facilities to "pay their way" through parking pricing, which means that motorists pay directly for using parking facilities. Parking pricing can be made increasingly convenient to implement through parking technology that accepts different payment methods (coins, bills, credit cards, cellular phone, Internet). The City can also finance these public parking lots through opt to have new development pay for parking through in-lieu fees. Through this method, the city allows developers to pay a fee (in-lieu) of providing the required parking. The city then uses the money collected from these fees to building public parking lots. It should be noted that in order to be most effective, policies for both on-street parking and off-street facilities must be implemented jointly.

Near-term and cumulative projects for the downtown are proposed to be mixed-use and of a higher density than currently exist in the area. Based on the phasing of these developments, the parking demand and resulting supply in the downtown should be phased in concert. As such, the City should incorporate these future developments into its parking management system. One of the key ways of determining how much parking is truly necessary within the downtown is to undertake a parking demand and traffic study. This will help identify peak parking demand characteristics to determine current parking utilization and further allow for the development of an appropriate parking policies and a fee schedule to finance.

## Smart Growth Parking Strategies

The City of Menlo Park has several smart growth enabling policies and programs established in their General Plan and Center City Guidelines, as a result, there are several smart growth strategies where the City has already laid the necessary groundwork. There are however several more innovative strategies that are implementable based on the City's goals and innovative smart growth programs and policies executed in communities throughout the Bay Area and North America. These policies require framing a new vision of thinking about the value of downtown and community via new technologies, pricing structures, shared parking, and the establishment of an in-lieu fee system that would require considerable buy-in from the business, residential, and developer communities and thus may take longer to implement. As with any new approach to conventional methods, careful consideration of these policies must be made with respect to

their specific context and degree of feasibility. The following policies and programs are suggested for more discussion.

**Non-Motorized Connectivity**
Included as a defining theme in the *Center City Design Guidelines*, Menlo Park emphasizes establishing greater connectivity within the downtown. Given the downtown's proximity to the Caltrain station, the City should explore policies and programs to enhance non-motorized connectivity between the downtown, the transit center, and the parking plazas. Federal funding is available for these enhancements through MTC's Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) grant program.
Possible enhancements may include:

- Improved bicycle lanes, bicycle parking, and storage facilities
- Pedestrian amenities such as: wider sidewalks, pedestrian scaled lighting, enhanced crosswalks, shade and rain protection (e.g. wide awnings on buildings, second floor balconies, or tree canopies), and street furniture
- Reorient driveway entrances and reduce curb cuts to promote continuity of sidwalks
- Establish connections to local and regional bike paths/trails
- Promote TDM programs requiring employer provided amenities (e.g. showers, bicycle storage, valet service)

**Parking Structures/Shared Parking**
Development of new or consolidation of existing parking facilities can help increase the efficiency of parking in the downtown as long as the amount of parking to be provided is justified by the actual parking demand characteristics of the area including consideration of auto ownership and transit use. Parking structures will be examined in context for each development. Consideration of on-street replacement parking, financial feasibility (cost, funding sources, etc), and shared parking opportunities will be explored to maximize the efficiency of the downtown parking supply and defray the costs over multiple developments. The downtown commercial core provides the opportunity to promote shared parking facilities particularly between office and commercial uses whose peak demand occur at different times and therefore can be accommodated with a smaller parking supply. As such, shared parking facilities can support increased activity in the core areas of the downtown.

**Parking Rates/Pricing**
The provision of off-street parking is inherently linked to that of on-street parking. Consequently, a balance between the use of off-street parking and on-street parking is necessary and can be achieved through the application of differential fees.

**On and Off Street Pricing Differentials**: On and off-street parking pricing differentials should be explored as a complimentary means to increase on-street short term parking supply by shifting long term users to off-street facilities. On-street parking facilities should be priced by peak hour and prime location in order to serve the highest demand.

**Reduced Parking Requirements**

The City's minimum parking requirements are reflective of typical parking standards developed to accommodate the "worst case scenario," and therefore tend to be excessive. Based on careful consideration of Menlo Park's unique downtown context, minimum parking requirements can be adjusted to reflect the following defining downtown characteristics, including

***Car Ownership/ Proximity to Transit***

A preliminary look at car ownership data (Census 200) for the downtown study area (Figure 2) shows that there are a significant percentage of households with no car available. These findings support the idea that proximity to a major transit hub[5] will attract households that choose to use transit whether for reasons of economics, health or personal choice. The level of car ownership is a good indicator of the potential for many of the smart growth strategies that can be implemented in the downtown near the Caltrain station. Additional data will be reviewed including the MTC analysis of the Bay Area Transportation Survey (BATS) data and Census 2000 data for 1-car ownership and mode to work.

**Transit Overlay Zone**

Establishing a specific zone that formally recognizes the downtown as a mixed use, dense environment with that is served by frequent transit service, notably rail service (e.g. Caltrain) allows for the opportunity to reduce the amount of required parking in the area.

**Unbundling of Parking**

As reflected in the City's General Plan, one of Menlo Park's primary goals is to develop a wide variety of housing types particularly in the commercially zones areas in and near downtown.
A policy for unbundling parking from residential developments should be explored particularly in developments within walking distance from a transit hub (i.e. Caltrain). MTC 2000 BATS data indicate a high rates transit, walking and bike trips[6], coupled with lower average auto ownership, vehicle trips and VMT for residents living within a half-mile of a transit station or ferry terminal.[7] Through such means as the "unbundling" of parking, the costs of parking are separated from the price of development, thereby providing people with alternative travel options.

**Parking Assessment Districts and In-lieu fees:**

Parking assessment districts are self taxing districts that contribute an assessed tax to the enhancement of parking conditions in a defined area. A steering committee made up of members of the business community and the transportation commission can be set up to control the

[5] Households within ½-mile of a station produce between 47% and 60% fewer vehicle miles than their suburban and rural counterparts, which means that emissions per capita is much lower for the ½-mile group.

[6] When broken down by mode, per capita transit trip rates for ½-mile residents are between two and a half and eleven times higher than other residents. Bicycle trip rates for ½-mile residents are almost twice the regional average and are between two and five times higher than residents living more than 1 mile from a rail or ferry stop. The same trend holds for walk trip rates.

[7] Households within ½-mile of a station produce between 47% and 60% fewer vehicle miles than their suburban and rural counterparts, which means that emissions per capita is much lower for the ½-mile group.

collection and direction/dispersal of the funding. Municipalities often put the funding toward a parking structure, but a steering committee can choose to direct the funding toward other desired/needed improvements within the district.

In-lieu fees assessed by the City (fees assessed to a development in-lieu of providing an off-street parking) can handled in a similar manner to a parking assessment district, where the fees collected are put toward improvements in the district as decided by the steering committee. This policy should be considered as the steering committee should be able to have the flexibility to decide/determine the district's most pressing parking and/or improvement needs.

**Parking Management Plan**
A comprehensive parking management plan should be considered which allocates appropriate amounts of parking to different users (e.g. residents, visitors, employees).

**Improved technology and convenience**

*Pay and display:*
Pay and display metering technology helps to institute flexibility in on street parking pricing and provide convenience to users.

- No time limits: progressive parking meter rates to discourage long term on street parking
- Peak time or prime area pricing to encourage high turnover rates and off street parking at busy times and popular spots.

*Improved wayfinding*:
Using permanent and variable signage including Intellgent Transportation Systems (ITS) such as variable message signs indicating available parking, rates and destinations will improve circulation and convenience and increase off-street parking utilization

## NEXT STEPS

1) Cruising exercise for on-street parking analysis will be conducted to assess the impacts on the transportation systems and air quality.
2) Stakeholder interviews: Stakeholders will be interviewed understand their perspectives on Menlo Park's potential parking policies/programs including an in-lieu fee for the development of parking facilities and support of Transportation Demand Management programs. Stakeholder to include but not limited to
   - City Departments of Planning, City Council,
   - Downtown property owners, Chamber of Commerce ,
   - Downtown Merchants Group, Menlo Park Presbyterian Church
   - CalTrain and SamTrans.
3) Development of a Parking profile for the Menlo Park Downtown area.